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Contact: Darren Rogers
Senior Director, Communications & Media Services
Churchill Downs Racetrack
(502) 636-4461 (office)
(502) 345-1030 (mobile)

ROAD TO VICTORY WORE DOWN MONOMOY GIRL IN GRADE II, \$200,000 GOLDEN ROD

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Nov. 25, 2017) – **John C. Oxley and Gary Barber's** 2-year-old filly **Road to Victory** pressured front-running 4-5 favorite **Monomoy Girl** throughout Saturday's 74th running of the \$200,000 Golden Rod (Grade II) at Churchill Downs and wore down her weary rival at the wire to win by a neck in her dirt debut.

Road to Victory, who ran 1 1/16 miles over a "fast" track in 1:43.36 to remain unbeaten in two starts, collected the \$115,320 first prize and 10 points as part of the 30-race "Road to the Kentucky Oaks" series, which offers points on a scale of 10-4-2-1 to the Top 4 finishers as a "Prep Season" race.

Julien Leparoux, who rode the winner for trainer **Mark Casse**, won the Golden Rod for record-equaling fourth time. Previously the Frenchman won the race with **Pure Clan** (2007), **Kathmanblu** (2010) and **Carina Mia** (2015). Hall of Fame rider **Don Brumfield** also won the Golden Rod four times.

Prior to the Golden Rod, she won her seven-furlong debut over Woodbine's synthetic Tapeta surface by 3 1/2 lengths.

"You don't know how they'll take to the dirt until they run the race," said **Norm Casse**, assistant to his father Mark. "Dad sent her down here to see if she was a quality dirt horse and she's had no bad days since we've had her. She prepared so well for this race. It's extra rewarding to win 2-year-old stakes races because it's a testament to our program. I take a lot of pride winning on these types of races at our home track."

Previously-unbeaten Monomoy Girl, the 6 1/2-length winner of the \$82,670 Rags to Riches Overnight Stakes at Churchill Downs on Oct. 29, broke alertly from post 6 and led the field of 10 2-year-old fillies through quarter-mile fractions of :23.81, :46.87 and 1:11.11 as Road to Victory, who broke from post 5, stayed close with every stride.

Down the backstretch, the duo opened a clear 4 1/2-length lead from **Kelly's Humor**, who tried to keep up in third before folding. Leaving the far turn, Road to Victory briefly grabbed the lead from the outside, but Monomoy Girl quickly reclaimed the lead and the two battled down the 1,234 1/2-length stretch. Monomoy Girl shook free near the eighth-mile pole, but her stride shortened inside the final sixteenth of a mile and Road to Victory continued to grind away to gamely prevail in the final yards.

"We sat in the right spot throughout the race," Leparoux said. "I didn't want the leader to get too far away from us. She tried really hard and came back at the end. We felt she didn't need the lead but relaxed in second. We knew the favorite would be on the lead and we just ran her down."

Cash Out was another 5 3/4 lengths back in third and was followed by **Dessert Honeys**, **Ipanema Beach**, **Sultry**, **Stronger Than Ever**, **Foxtrot Sally**, **Caroline the Great**, **Kelly's Humor**, **Undivided** and **Deadline**.

Road to Victory improved her record to 2-2-0-0—\$144,670 and paid \$16.40, \$6.80 and \$6.80 as the 7-1 third betting choice. Monomoy Girl, ridden by **Florent Geroux**, paid \$2.80 and \$2.40. Cash Out, under **Junior Alvarado**, returned \$8.40 to show.

"I'm disappointed to be honest, but she's a nice filly and hopefully she'll recover from that and somehow get back here on Oaks Day," said Monomoy Girl's trainer **Brad Cox**. "They went a little quick up front and she really didn't get a breather down the backside, being pressed the whole way. ... Julien is a smart rider and it looked like he had horse left, and he did. She did kind of spurt away a little bit, but I thought the race around the turn and up the backside kind of took its toll on her a little bit late. I think that's why she was kind of getting a little leg-weary."

Road to Victory, a daughter of Quality Road out of the Tiznow mare Favoritism, was bred in Kentucky by George Bolton and David DiPietro.

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GOLDEN ROD QUOTES

JULIEN LEPAROUX, jockey of ROAD TO VICTORY (winner): “We sat in the right spot throughout the race. I didn’t want the leader to get too far away from us. She tried really hard and came back at the end. We felt she didn’t need the lead but relaxed in second. We knew the favorite would be on the lead and we just ran her down.”

NORM CASSE, assistant trainer of ROAD TO VICTORY (winner): “You don’t know how they’ll take to the dirt until they run the race. Dad sent her down here to see if she was a quality dirt horse and she’s had no bad days since we’ve had her. She prepared so well for this race. It’s extra rewarding to win 2-year-old stakes races because it’s a testament to our program. I take a lot of pride winning on these types of races at our home track.”

BRAD COX, trainer of MONOMOY GIRL (runner-up): “I’m disappointed to be honest, but she’s a nice filly and hopefully she’ll recover from that and somehow get back here on Oaks Day. They went a little quick up front and she really didn’t get a breather down the backside, being pressed the whole way. But she’s a nice filly.”

Q: *Your filly spurted away from the winner a bit in upper stretch ...* “Julien (Leparoux on Road to Victory) is a smart rider and it looked like he had horse left, and he did. She did kind of spurt away a little bit, but I thought the race around the turn and up the backside kind of took its toll on her a little bit late. I think that’s why she was kind of getting a little leg-weary.”

FLORENT GEROUX, jockey on MONMOY GIRL (runner-up): “The winner just ran us down right at the end. The other filly (Road to Victory) was right next to me all the way and she kept my filly busy, and ran me down at the end. I thought I had it for a little bit.”

“RUSTY” ARNOLD, trainer of CASH OUT (third) and IPANEMA BEACH (fifth): “I was real pleased with both of my fillies. Cash Out had run all of her races on the turf and we were trying her on the dirt for the first time and she ran really well. I was really happy with our other filly (Ipanema Beach). She was a maiden who had run well first time out, but she was going two turns and was out there in the 12-hole. But she was really running in the stretch and I thought she was running faster than anybody down the lane.”

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